

Dade cultural leaders use films of the past to look to the future

By MARILYN BOWDEN

With a busy agenda of new exhibits, festivities and preservation projects, Dade's cultural heritage organizations are looking towards the future through the lens of the past.

Miami is one of the few US cities whose entire history has been captured on film, says Steven Davidson, executive director of the Louis Wolfson II Media History Center, housed in the Main Library.

"Miami and film both celebrated their centennials last year," he said. "So by a quirk of fate, we have a pretty substantial visual record."

Biweekly screenings at the center from April 4-May 18 will highlight home movies, vintage TV programs and other productions spanning eight decades.

On April 17 on the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade Community College, the center will present a seminar on the nearly mythic Summer of Love — 1967 — as it really was in both San Francisco and Miami.

Mr. Davidson said the 10-year-old archive has mushroomed to

become one of the largest regional collections of film and television footage in the country.

Meanwhile, the Black Archives History & Research Foundation of South Florida is on course with proposed renovations in Overtown, said Executive Director Derek T. Davis.

"The contractors are out there right now restoring the historic Lyric Theater building," he said. "Because the historic site lacks some of the amenities necessary to make it functional today, Mr. Davis said, the Archives will build an extension on land donated by the City of Miami north of the theater."

"We hired a theatrical consultant who completed a use-and-needs study in February," he said. "We're reviewing that package, and negotiating with them to develop a building program for the expansion."

Mr. Davis said the Archives has hired urban planners Duany & Plater-Zyberk to help prepare an update of the 1989 master plan for the Historic Overtown Folk Life Village.

On May 10, he said, the Archives will host a free concert, Jazz in the Afternoon, on the site of the Lyric annex.

May will be musical at the Historical Museum of Southern Florida as well. From May 23-Oct. 26, "Caribbean Percussion Traditions in Miami" — funded in part by a National Endowment for the Arts grant — will explore island rhythms from the runba to the bomba, Haitian Voodoo drumming to Bahamian Junkanoo, said Nicole Shuey, the museum's grants manager.

She said the exhibit reflects the museum's vision.

"Over the past several years, we've started focussing on the folk life and cultural heritage of the community and trying to bring that into the history — particularly the musical heritage," she said.

"Children at Play," a traveling exhibit from a Cincinnati historical museum, will arrive just in time for the new school year, she said.

Also coming up this fall is a photo retrospective of the Everglades, Ms. Shuey said — com-



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memorating the 50th anniversary of Everglades National Park.

Speaking of anniversaries, Dade Heritage Trust is 25 years old this year. Sometime this fall, there'll be a black-tie gala to celebrate, said Executive Director Becky Roper Matkov.

Building on the momentum of the Cape Florida Lighthouse restoration, she said, the Trust is launching a campaign called Preserving Public Places. It will focus on Freedom Tower, the Miami City Cemetery, Lummus Park and historic Dade schools — "sites we feel are neglected at this point in time," Ms. Matkov said.

"One of our goals is to tie in with the concept of sustainability," she said. "We're very excited about being proactive — not just reacting one building at a time, when the bulldozers are out front."

The Land Trust of Dade County

is trying to keep the bulldozers from leveling the Dice House, one of the last historic homes in the Kendall area, said Executive Director Diana Gonzalez.

"The Dice House is facing demolition. Even though it's historic, the county Historic Preservation Board issued a certificate of appropriateness for demolition."

Ms. Gonzalez said the current owners — who want to develop the site — will donate the house if it can be relocated.

"We're working with them to identify an appropriate site, and to come up with the money for relocation and preservation," she said.

A cocktail party April 11 at Miami River Inn will celebrate the birthday of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Ms. Gonzalez said, and also raise funds for the proposed Marjory Stoneman Douglas Everglades Center.